

EVANGELICAL RESPONSES TO HISTORICAL CRITICISM OF THE BIBLE: A BRIEF SURVEY

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Introduction

The eighteenth century enlightenment saw the rise of the historical-critical method of approaching scripture. This method is concerned with "getting behind the text" to determine how the text arrived at its present form, hence it being called a diachronic approach to scripture. This is done through form criticism (the study of how the traditions that are found in the text developed), source criticism (the study of the sources used to produce the text) and redaction criticism (the study of how the text was shaped into its present form). This method also concerns the authorship and dating of the various biblical books, with many of its proponents developing theories that are based on the idea that many of the books of the Bible are not actually written by the persons to whom they ascribed, but are written much later (sometimes centuries later). Understandably, this kind of approach is met with criticism by conservative Evangelicals. Some Evangelicals have proposed alternative views that preserve the integrity of scripture and the traditional views regarding its dating and authorship. The purpose of this article is to provide a short survey of various higher-critical theories that are common amongst biblical academics, as well as the responses to these theories that have been provided by conservative scholars, thus presenting the various flaws that exist in the various historical-critical theories, as well as those of the method itself as it has been applied by most liberal scholars past and present.

First of all, it is worth looking at the various theories that fall under the rubric of the historical-critical method. One such theory is the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis, which is named after

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